



# FSA*Now*

*The Monthly Newsletter for FSA Staff*

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## FSA Hosts CEG Fellows

As the keynote speaker for last month's Council for Excellence in Government's (CEG) "Conversations With Leaders" program, Terri Shaw spoke of the challenges she confronts as FSA's chief operating officer. Specifically, Terri discussed the leadership principles she believes are critical to a successful organization. Addressing the CEG Fellows, Terri's open style invited a lively discussion as she shared her work experiences and her vision for FSA leadership.

Terri admitted that a significant challenge at FSA is the ability to maintain focus on the critical priorities when new challenges are presented daily. "We must run our business *everyday*," she said. "We need to constantly re-evaluate our priorities so as to ensure a shared understanding across our team." Terri discussed how the FSA Senior Leadership team used an "urgency/value" grid to help determine priorities and develop the FSA 2003 Annual Performance Plan. Terri also stressed the importance of maintaining group involvement and always working collaboratively.

According to the Council for Excellence in Government, the Fellows program "focuses on



*Terri Shaw discusses leadership challenges with CEG Fellows and guests.*

leadership development for mid-level federal executives. Since 1988, the program has included over 1800 participants from all Cabinet Departments and major agencies."

"Conversations With Leaders" is a leadership training program sponsored by the Council for Excellence in Government. Events are held monthly at different locations within the Department with future events planned at other government agencies. Previous Department speakers include Tom Skelly, budget service director, and Bill Smith, senior advisor for urban and rural policy.



*Members of the Management Council pose for photos with Secretary Paige following the presentation.*

## FSA's Presentation to Secretary Paige

On June 26-27, members of the Management Council briefed Secretary Paige on FSA's operations, programs, challenges and successes. The Secretary was extremely impressed with the scope of FSA's responsibilities and its many accomplishments. Secretary Paige asked Terri to convey to all FSA employees his pride and gratitude for all their efforts. The presentation can be found on FSAnet's homepage under News.

# FSA in Atlanta



*Region IV staff members pose with the gift baskets they prepared for U.S. troops overseas.*

## Q&A with Region IV Area Case Director Erin Swanson-Hall

### What FSA functions are located in the Atlanta office?

Three functions are located in the Atlanta office: FSA Application, School Eligibility and Delivery Services (Case Management & Oversight and School Relations); Borrower Services (Collections); and Financial Partners.

### Tell us about some of your special programs.

Some of our preventative initiatives include Early Detection & Prevention, in which we visit schools during the first six months of participation. Market segment conferences are targeted to specific types of schools such as HBCUs, cosmetology schools and career colleges. By focusing on the unique problems in each market segment, we are better able to tailor our response to meet their needs.

Our Compliance & Oversight efforts focus on increasing our strategic framework by identifying and diversifying our alternative monitoring techniques to enhance program integrity (i.e. low priority reviews, offsite desk reviews, targeted reviews, etc.).

The Atlanta office also continues to promote and strengthen accountability of the Title IV programs in varying market segments. We identify common trends and problem areas and develop tailored approaches to address and resolve recurring problems. Additionally, our experienced staff and consultants facilitate ways in which schools self-manage on-going issues, including training and/or long-term contractual commitments.

### How does the Atlanta office “help put America through school?”

We have “cradle to grave” responsibility for over 720 post-secondary institutions. This includes initial eligibility determinations,  
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## Atlanta Attractions

- \* **Atlanta History Center:** includes permanent exhibitions on Atlanta, the South and the Civil War.
- \* **Centennial Olympic Park:** this famous park was a popular meeting place during the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta.
- \* **Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site:** features the birthplace and grave of the former civil rights leader and Ebenezer Baptist Church, where he delivered his first sermon.
- \* **Jimmy Carter Library and Museum:** this museum houses a replica of the Oval Office and exhibits on Carter’s presidency.
- \* **The World of Coca-Cola:** visitors can sample Coke products, view Coca-Cola exhibits and learn everything they could possibly want to know about this popular beverage.
- \* **Atlanta Botanical Garden:** features acres of woodlands and landscaped gardens that include rose, rock, herb and Japanese gardens.



## Atlanta’s Best (according to Region IV staff members)

- \* **Best Atlanta restaurant:** Any owned by the Buckhead Restaurant group (Atlanta Fish Market, Buckhead Diner, etc.).
- \* **Best local cuisine:** Depends on your taste....fried green tomatoes, red beans & rice, grits, biscuits and gravy and of course, sweet tea!
- \* **Favorite local pro sports team:** Atlanta Braves, who have the highest winning percentage in all of major league baseball.
- \* **Favorite Region IV college basketball and football teams:** Of course, we’re divided in our support especially in terms of where you grew up or currently reside. Our North Carolina folks would cast their vote for college basketball for the Duke Blue Devils, while our locals would say the Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets are boss. A perennial favorite college football is the University of Georgia Bulldogs.
- \* **The most notable Atlanta native(s):** There are lots of notable southerners - Martin Luther King Jr., Jimmy Carter and of course, Rhett Butler and Scarlet O’Hara!

# EXTRA! EXTRA!

## Studentaid.ed.gov Update

On June 30, studentaid.ed.gov received 58,738 visits, marking the busiest single day in the site's history. For the month of June, studentaid.ed.gov exceeded one million visits representing an increase of 85.7 percent over the previous month and marking the first time the site has exceeded one million visits in a month. The month over month growth is attributed to numerous factors including an AOL promotion and expanded FSA outreach efforts.

## HBCU Training

On June 25-26, Region VII School Relations Officer Tammy Gay and Region VII Training Officer Linda Coffey trained 50 HBCU financial aid administrators and business officers at Dillard University in New Orleans. Topics included Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), FSA Web sites, return of Title IV funds and reconciliation.

## Leadership Excellence 2003

On June 23-24, FSA University held the Leadership Excellence 2003 kick-off session. The training, which focuses on collaboration, performance management and leadership principals, is targeted to all rating officials in FSA. "Through August 7, FSA staff members have the opportunity to further their knowledge of leadership in the workplace," said Staff Development & Training Division Director Anne Teresa. "Many staff members have already taken advantage of the courses, and the feedback has been positive."

## Students.gov

During the week of June 29-July 5, students.gov recorded 61,230 visits (1.5 million hits). Visitors spent an average of seven minutes on the site and viewed four pages. Site traffic increased significantly since AOL's Government Guide began to feature students.gov more prominently.

## Swanson-Hall Q & A, con't

annual review of financial and compliance audits, student complaints and concerns, management improvement services, oversight and compliance, program reviews, and initiation of adverse actions that may lead to voluntary or involuntary withdrawal from the Title IV programs. The past year was particularly challenging. We have experienced an unusually high level of school closures and loss of accreditation. In these cases, students were directly affected. In every situation, we worked closely with other FSA divisions, accrediting agencies, state representatives and individual schools to assist in the placement of students through teach-out arrangements or transfers. In every instance, the student's interests were paramount!

### What is unique about the Atlanta office?

Our staff is an extremely talented group with in-depth experience and education in financial aid - whether as beneficiaries of Title IV, as former financial aid administrators or as certified public accountants. Staff members are committed, flexible and creative. In all, they are experts at balancing the Department's interests with the schools and students' needs.

Region IV also has a diverse assortment of post-secondary schools, including the largest population of HBCUs and Spanish-speaking schools.

### Has Atlanta particularly benefited by having FSA in the city? How?

Yes. Atlanta is centrally located to many of our southern-based schools, which allows us to work directly with local schools. The ease of accessibility through Atlanta's Hartsfield International Airport, the nation's largest airport, benefits FSA by reducing travel times and costs.

### What else would you like FSA to know about the Atlanta team?

The Atlanta team members exercise solid and sound judgment. They are adept at evaluating and assessing a situation and arriving at a mutually beneficial decision without compromising organizational interests.

## SkillsUSA-VICA Career Fair

Region VII's Schools and Students Channels recently partnered in representing FSA at the SkillsUSA-VICA (Vocational Industrial Clubs of America) national conference and championships in Kansas City, MO, June 23-27. More than 4,200 high school and post-secondary students attended the event, which also featured a Career and Education Fair.

Region VII School Relations Manager Mark Walsh commented: "Working directly with large numbers of students is not part of our core duties in the Schools Channel. However, this activity does fit in nicely with No Child Left Behind and ED's Strategic Plan. We were able to supply our future customers with the materials to help them make an informed decision about continuing their education."



*Region VII Accounts Manager David Bartlett (right) assists Career and Education Fair participants with financial aid materials.*



# Scenes from NASFAA

Almost 50 FSA and OPE staff members attended NASFAA's (National Association of School Financial Aid Administrators) annual conference in Salt Lake City July 9-12. FSA conducted 19 presentations, showcased 14 products and services in the FSA exhibit booth, and COO Terri Shaw provided an FSA update to the NASFAA Board of Directors.

**Right:** Jamie Hyatt (left) provides NSLDS information to conference participants.

**Middle:** Terri Shaw, Kristie Hansen and Marianna O'Brien welcome PHEAA Federal Relations Manager Scott Miller to the FSA exhibit booth.

**Middle Right:** Patricia Lyles (left) demonstrates FSA's online applications.



*FSA's exhibit booth attracting foot traffic.*



*David Bartnicki (center) chats with school reps visiting the FSA exhibit booth.*



# My FSA

## **FSA Now talked to Patrick Bradfield about his role in Procurement Planning and Contract Management.**

**Q: Describe your role here at FSA.**

A: My title is Director, Acquisition Planning and Contract Management. In this position, one of my major responsibilities is making sure our procurements align with FSA's performance goals. By procurements, I'm not solely referring to contracts, rather the allocation of resources to accomplish the mission at hand. These resources include technology, customer service and our team of employees.

**Q: What have you learned thus far while working at FSA?**

A: Simply stated, I've confirmed the quality of our FSA team. Having the opportunity to work for this organization from 1999 to 2001 and then return to FSA at the end of last January, I can still attest to this agency's honorable mission. Indeed, the U.S.'s socio-economic success is closely tied with the quality of education and, in turn, with FSA's enthusiastic, dedicated staff. It is a matter of fact; the caliber of the employees is a tribute to the significance of the mission—to help put America through school.

**Q: What are the present and future challenges presented to you here at FSA?**

A: A short-term challenge is to ensure employees fully understand that contracts don't run our business. It is my observation that contracts often drive the budget process, i.e. last year's contract would dictate the budget for the following year. The true driver of our business is our mission and what material and services we need to acquire to accomplish our mission— people, customer service, the know-how, and technology, to name a few. With regards to a long-term challenge, I've proposed to establish a team of people to assist Project Managers in properly researching and planning new procurements to meet mission needs. Once we have this team in place, the chal-

lenge is to keep everyone motivated and aware of changes, which must be made to facilitate efficiency and improvement. At times, people become too concerned with maintaining the status quo, sacrificing efficiency when new practices or technology can be applied.

**Q: Tell us about your previous professional experiences. How will those experiences help you in performing your duties here?**

A: After graduating from college in '78, I worked for the Army until '92, serving as an Infantry officer for much of that time. I later entered the private sector and, in due course, began working for FSA in '99. Following a re-entry into the private sector in 2001, I returned to FSA at the end of last January as Director of Contracts and Acquisitions. So while I've been in the same business for about 20 years, I've seen it evolve from several different perspectives. I've gained a real tough education on the private-side particularly in regards to winning or losing contracts or in prevailing in a contract dispute as my immediate future hung on my success. I hope to contribute to the Department's mission by making the most of my government and private sector experience.

**Q: What do you like to do when you're not at work?**

A: I love freshwater fishing, especially for trout. I usually fish locally for bass on Lake Anna and occasionally make a trip to New York. Yet, I usually release the fish I catch in the hopes I might catch them again later. I also love teaching. I was a part-time college teacher and have coached teams in the Army and still coach youth sports teams. In addition, I find gardening to be therapeutic. Given my Infantry experience, I'm a pretty good digger. Most importantly, I enjoy spending time with my son, who's a high school senior, and my daughter, a college sophomore.



### ***Did You Know...*** **Employee Express**

Employee Express provides federal employees private and secure online access to their discretionary payroll and personnel information. Using Employee Express, employees may view or change their address; health coverage; direct deposit; leave and earnings statements; federal and state withholdings; thrift savings plans; and savings bonds. For more information on Employee Express, go to [www.employeeexpress.gov](http://www.employeeexpress.gov). If you have forgotten your Employee Express PIN, call (478) 757-3030.